Assess
News on WorkSafeBC products, programs, and services
March 2006

Your feedback is wanted

Stakeholder input invited on proposed policies

WorkSafeBC (the Workers' Compensation Board) is inviting feedback from employers and other external stakeholders on proposed amendments to assessment and prevention policies. The goal of the proposed changes is to clarify workplace status and the roles and responsibilities of workplace parties, and to ensure that enforcement policies are fair, comprehensive, and effective.

The proposed amendments are part of the Board of Directors' Health and Safety Strategy, which aims to reduce serious injuries and fatalities in the workplace and address the changing nature of working relationships. The proposed amendments relate to workplace status policies in the *Assessment Manual* (policies that determine who is a worker, employer, or independent operator under the *Workers Compensation Act*), and to policies concerning workplace roles and responsibilities and enforcement in the *Prevention Manual*.

The proposed amendments stem from discussions at a symposium hosted by WorkSafeBC's Board of Directors in October 2005, where stakeholders provided input on the current and possible future state of the occupational health and safety system in B.C.

As part of its health and safety initiative, the Board of Directors also directed WorkSafeBC staff to develop a comprehensive strategy and policy amendment package to reduce serious injuries and fatalities.

To review the discussion papers and proposed policy amendments, visit our web site at **www.worksafebc.com/regulation_and_policy/policy_consultation/default.asp**.

You can submit feedback via an online survey. Or, you can mail or fax your written submission to the Policy and Research Division as per the instructions on the web site. The deadline for feedback is May 12, 2006.

IMPORTANT REMINDER

About your remittance form

In this mailing you'll find your first-quarter Employer's Remittance Form for 2006. If you're an employer with just one classification (as indicated on your form), here's what you need to do to properly report your payroll, make your payment, and avoid penalties:

- If you report your payroll and pay your premiums by mail, return your completed remittance form — including the payment stub — in the enclosed envelope.
- If you pay your premiums at your bank, be sure to send us the top portion of your form in the enclosed envelope, or fax it to us at 604 244-6490 or toll-fee at 1 888 992-6622.
- If you report your payroll and pay your premiums online or through our automated phone system, you are not required to return any portion of the form to us.

Be sure to make your payment by April 20 to avoid a penalty and an overdue charge of 1 percent per month. For more on WorkSafeBC's (the Workers' Compensation Board) new penalty structure, see the yellow insert included with this mailing.

Act now to avoid penalties

If you haven't filed your annual Employer Payroll and Contract Labour Report and reconciled your account for 2005 yet, there's still time – if you act quickly. If you file your report now, you can avoid a penalty ranging from $50 to $1,000 depending on the amount of your premiums, plus a 1 percent monthly fee on outstanding balances.

To report your payroll and reconcile your account quickly, go to WorkSafeBC.com; it will take six minutes or less. Or you can report your payroll and make your payment by credit card using our automated phone system. Call 604 244-6181 or toll free at 1 888 922-2768 and follow the voice prompts.

You can also mail your payroll report to WorkSafeBC (the Workers' Compensation Board). Be sure to include the payment stub at the bottom of the form, along with your cheque (if you owe money) in the self-addressed envelope. If you pay at your bank, promptly mail or fax the top section of your form to us. You'll find our address and fax number on your form.

For more information, see the instruction guide that accompanies your payroll report. Or, go to **WorkSafeBC.com**, click on "Insurance" at the top of our home page, then select "Manage your account."

Paying their fair share

While most businesses pay their share of premiums to WorkSafeBC (the Workers' Compensation Board), there are still some that don't. This is unfair. It gives these employers a competitive advantage over your firm and burdens all other business owners who fund the workers' compensation system.

But that's changing. Through a recent agreement between the Canada Revenue Agency and WorkSafeBC, our business community will soon achieve a more level playing field. The agreement allows both parties to exchange information – such as contact details and payroll figures for businesses in B.C. – and to contact firms that are not registered with both agencies to inform them of their legal requirements.

WorkSafeBC has now started contacting those firms. By making certain they register and pay their share of insurance premiums, we're helping to create a system that's fair for all employers and reducing the risk of workplace injury even further.

For more information, please visit our web site at **WorkSafeBC.com**.

Take the NAOSHWeek challenge

The North American Occupational Safety and Health (NAOSH) Week is an annual event designed to raise awareness of workplace health and safety issues. Companies of all sizes are encouraged to participate. This year, NAOSHWeek takes place from April 30 - May 6, 2006. The theme is "Safety and Health: A Foundation for Excellence - Review. Refresh. Revitalize."

Workplaces participate by setting goals for workplace health and safety, creating awareness of these goals within and outside their organization, and implementing a plan to accomplish these goals. Prizes are awarded to organizations and individuals for their outstanding promotion of workplace health and safety during NAOSHWeek. Award categories include most innovative, best category winner, best presentation of theme, and best new entry.

This year marks the first time that British Columbia is hosting the national launch of NAOSHWeek.

For a participation guide and updates, visit **www.worksafebc.com/news_room/campaigns/naosh_week/default.asp**.

Preparing for a flu pandemic

If a flu pandemic were to strike B.C. tomorrow, how would you protect your workers? While no one can say with certainty if a flu pandemic – such as the avian flu – will occur, most researchers who study influenza viruses agree that a pandemic is increasingly likely in the near future. And governments worldwide are urging businesses to plan for the possibility.

So is WorkSafeBC (the Workers' Compensation Board). And, to help your business prepare, we're developing a series of practical health and safety materials designed to help you protect your workers against infectious disease. Look for them on our web site at **WorkSafeBC.com** this spring.

You'll also find a wealth of information in sections 115 through 121 of the *Workers Compensation Act*, which describe the obligations that employers and workers have to maintain health and safety at work. Look under "General Duties." Sections 6.33 through to 6.36 of the Occupational Health and Safety Regulation outline the responsibilities of employers to reduce their workers' exposure to biohazards such as infectious diseases.

For more information, contact WorkSafeBC's Prevention Information Line at 604 276-3100 or toll-free at 1 888 621-7233.

Access

March 2006

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This newsletter is also available electronically on the WorkSafeBC web site at www.worksafebc.com/publications/newsletters/access/.

Look for the next issue in June 2006.

WORK SAFE
WORKING TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE

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